

APPENDIX B: SABINE PRESS RELEASE

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State of Louisiana
Department of Social Services
Office of the Secretary

NEWS RELEASE

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School Board Approves Sabine Parish To Host State's First Neighborhood Place

BATON ROUGE – The Sabine Parish School Board has approved an agreement with the state that will allow the parish to serve as host for Louisiana's first Neighborhood Place, providing citizens in need with a centralized location for collaborative human services.

Appearing before the Board on behalf of a consortium of five state agencies committed to the implementation and success of Louisiana's Neighborhood Place were Deputy Secretary of the Department of Social Services Terri Ricks, and Rep. Frank Howard, R-Many, one of the bill's co-sponsors.

Created to better serve citizens in need, the Neighborhood Place legislation -- signed into law by Gov. Bobby Jindal as Act 775 of the 2008 Regular Legislature -- provides for collaborative and integrated service delivery by putting critical human services offered by state agencies and local service providers under one roof.

As required by Act 775, five state departments are working with communities and local service providers to implement Neighborhood Place: The Department of Education, the Department of Health and Hospitals, the Department of Social Services, the Louisiana Workforce Commission and the Office of Youth Development.

According to Ricks, Neighborhood Place uses a holistic approach that is proven to create better outcomes for families by offering a broad range of needed services, including student achievement services, child care assistance, Medicaid/LaCHIP, food stamps, workforce development, child welfare services and much more.

"When families visit Neighborhood Place, rather than traveling to multiple locations and receiving fragmented services, they will be offered the benefit of coordinated solutions," Ricks said.

The Board's approval comes on the heels of a visit to DSS state headquarters in Baton Rouge by Louisville Deputy Superintendent of Schools Marty Bell, known as the grandfather of Neighborhood Place in Kentucky. Louisiana is using the Kentucky program as a model.

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"We started Neighborhood Place in Kentucky as a means of improving the educational achievement of students in Louisville," Bell said. "It has achieved a 15-year track record of documented success."

During Bell's recent visit, he said students fail when families find themselves facing the challenges of truancy, financial instability from unemployment or underemployment, undependable child care and other social hurdles.

"I am very excited to watch Neighborhood Place grow in your state," Bell said. "It is gratifying to see Louisiana embrace a concept for delivering services that will help families and children experience safer, healthier and more self-sufficient lives."

Although the Sabine Parish site has not yet been identified, it is slated to open in the coming months -- making it the state's first operational Neighborhood Place. Additionally, construction already has been under way for a New Orleans site.

When renovations are completed in September 2009, Katrina-damaged Mahalia Jackson School in Central City will house a Neighborhood Place, along with a center for early childhood learning and family services.

"Communities that see the benefit of delivering services in partnership with state agencies in order to create better outcomes for families, and who desire to host a site in available space, are considered ready for Neighborhood Place," Ricks said.

According to Ricks, the state group agreed to the partnership with the Sabine Parish School District because the district has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to coordinating services and stakeholders in order to improve student achievement and better serve its children and their families.